

Plastic Bags and By-Catch

Plastic bags are a “sexy” environmental issue with supermarkets and Governments rushing to “outgreen” each other in their support of alternatives, yet whether you put your shopping into a recycled or biodegradable plastic, paper or string bag is far less significant than what you put in your bag in the first place.

Planet Ark estimates that discarded plastic bags from the 6.9 billion used annually in Australia kill 100,000 animals each year including birds, seals and turtles.

However this “collateral damage” is tiny compared with the thousands of tonnes of non-target animals killed during commercial fishing operations. For example, bottom dredging for prawns is like clearfelling in the oceans — everything is taken and most of it discarded.

By-catch in commercial fishing is typically between 40 and 50 percent of the entire catch — sometimes higher. This includes birds like albatrosses and marine mammals like sea lions and dolphins.

So if you buy fish in your plastic bags, the dead wildlife due to the fishing will be much larger than the small relative amount due to the bag.



Long line fishing sets thousands of hooks on lines up to 60km long — many albatross die as bycatch. Photo: Graham Robertson.

Fisheries and Aquaculture

Despite the massive expansion of aquaculture in South Australia, it is still not sustainable. Aquaculture is a net consumer of fish, not a producer. It takes between 8 and 11 kg of pilchards used as feed to produce 1 kg of southern bluefin tuna.

The Protein Myth

The myth that animal protein is essential in the human diet was based on studies of rats. The World Health Organisation revised its protein scoring tables in 1991 after research on humans demonstrated that plant protein was perfectly adequate.

But not only is it adequate, decades of good research shows that eating a whole foods plant-based diet, minimising refined foods, salt and animal fat, avoiding meat, eggs and dairy products leads to the greatest health and the lowest incidence of heart disease, cancer and other western lifestyle induced diseases.

Why not change?

Reducing or eliminating the animal products in your diet is better for you and the environment. It is the most effective single way you have to reduce your environmental footprint on the planet. So lobby Governments to act on climate change and lobby companies to develop a sense of stewardship and ethics. But you don't have to wait for them to act, you can do something important right now.

For more information on the steps you can take to reduce, or eliminate your meat consumption, see:

<http://www.vegsoc.org.au/>

References

The critical information in this leaflet comes either from the CSIRO/Sydney University Balancing Act report 2005, the Australian Greenhouse Inventory 2002, or various Australian Bureau of Statistics Year Books. The Sydney University study mentioned is by Lenzen and Dey published in Energy Economics 2002.

Our website has numerous references to nutrition, delicious vegetarian recipes, shopping guide, and many more resources to help make the easy switch to a vegetarian diet — to benefit you, and the earth.

Thanks to PETA for the front leaf graphic!
Please download, copy and distribute this leaflet.

**Think you can be
a meat-eating
environmentalist?**



Think again!

“There is no doubt that reducing consumption of meat, especially red meat, is one of the most effective things the individual can do to reduce their greenhouse gas pollution.”

Professor Ian Lowe,
President, Australian Conservation Foundation.

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